DISCOURSE

ON

SPIRITUAL IMPROVEMENT

FROM

AFFLICTION.

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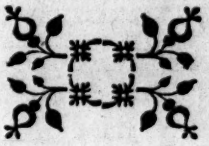
14

THE SECOND EDITION.



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III. 61.

TO

The RIGHT HONOURABLE

THE

EARL of MOUNTRATH,

—FROM WHOM THE AUTHOR HAS EXPERIENCED THE MOST GENEROUS KINDNESS, AND THE TENDEREST HUMANITY IN HIS *AFFLICTED STATE*,—

THE FOLLOWING DISCOURSE,

IS MOST RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED

BY

HIS LORDSHIP's

MOST OBLIGED,

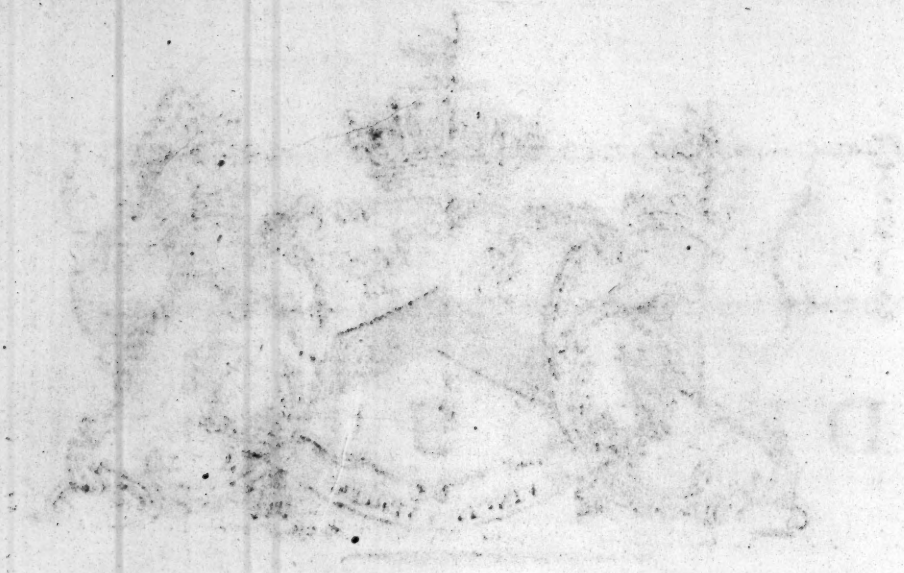
MOST GRATEFUL

AND

MOST DUTIFUL

HUMBLE SERVANT,

JOHN DARWALL.



DISCOURSE.

2 COR. iv. 16, 17.

FOR which Cauſe we faint not: but though our outward Man periſh; yet the inward Man is renewed Day by Day:

For our light Affliction, which is but for a Moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory.

SAINT Paul having before inſpired the faithful with the certain Hope of a bleſſed Reſurrection to eternal Life, urges this, together with the other Conſiderations

in

in the Text, as their Comfort and Support under all the Trials and Difficulties of their Chriſtian Warfare.

From theſe words let us take Occaſion to conſider——

FIRST—The great Duty of Chriſtian Perſeverance:

SECONDLY—The *Improvement we ought to make* under *the chaſtening Hand of God*, and the *Frailties* of *Mortality*: and

THIRDLY—The Reward which will ſo infinitely *preponderate* all our *Sufferings*,—The *grand Reward* of an eternal *Weight* of Glory.

First, reſpecting the great Duty of *Chriſtian*

tian Perſeverance:—"For which Cauſe we "*faint not.*"

Were we all to die like the Beaſts that periſh, and be doomed to an everlaſting Oblivion, how ſad and melancholy would be the Proſpect,—how *dark* and *gloomy* would be our Paſſage to the Grave! But ſince Chriſt has brought *Life* and *Immortality* to *Light* through the Goſpel, and has given us a Promiſe and Aſſurance of *our* Reſurrection, and of his Power to effect it, in that he hath raiſed himſelf from the dead; and will by his *Almighty Power* not only raiſe us up at the laſt Day, but by his *all-ſufficient Merits* reward our Chriſtian Labours, which we are graciouſly promiſed,—if *ſincere*,—*poor* and *imperfect* as they are, ſhall not be in vain in the Lord; what an Encouragement is this to us not to

be *weary* in *well-doing*, ſince in due Time we ſhall reap, if we *faint not!* It is our reaſonable Duty and Service that we ſhould preſs forward towards the Prize of the High-Calling, which is in Chriſt Jeſus, if we ever mean to obtain it. If we would form any rational Hopes of Salvation, we muſt *perſevere unto the End*.—How many, who have once known the Way of Righteouſneſs,—(the Tenor of whoſe Lives has before been orderly and Chriſtian-like) have, towards the Concluſion of their Days, "looked back "from the Plough,—forſaken their firſt "Love,"—given Way, perhaps, more to the *Sins of Age* than to the *Sins of Youth*; ſuch as *inordinate Anger*,—*an inſatiable Deſire after the Things of this Life*,—intemperate *Drinking*, and the like; (Sins, which, unleſs particularly guarded againſt, too naturally *grow*

upon

upon thoſe of advanced Years, who in the Cloſe of Life ought more eſpecially to *grow* in Grace) and have at laſt, through the Luſts of the Fleſh or the Wiles of Satan, been unwarily betrayed into everlaſting Deſtruction! How careful then ought we to be of *departing* from the living God! ſince if we are not *faithful unto Death*, we ſhall unhappily forfeit his Favour, and *loſe the Crown of Life*.—— "In the midſt of Life we are in Death:"—A thouſand fatal Accidents, or deadly Diſeaſes, may *overtake* us, when we are *wandering* with *unhallowed Steps* from Religion's *ſacred Paths*,—from the *right Way* that leadeth unto *everlaſting Life* into the devious Paths of Vice that lead to *eternal Death*; which may cut us off in the midſt of our Sins, and conſign us to Regions of endleſs

endleſs Miſery and Woe. And, if in *the midſt of Life*,—in the *Vigour* of *Health* and *Strength*,—*Continuance* and *Perſeverance* in *Well-doing* be ſo *requiſite* for the *Security* of our *Salvation* through Chriſt; *Chriſtian Diligence* becomes our more *immediate Duty* under the *Preſſure* of *Sickneſs*, and *Infirmities* of *Age*: which brings us to the SECOND PARTICULAR contained in the Text; "*but though our outward Man periſh, yet* "*the inward Man is renewed Day by Day*:"— This ought at leaſt always to be the Caſe, though it too rarely proves ſo. Let us then conſider the Improvement we ought to make under the chaſtening Hand of God, and the Frailties of Mortality.

God is not willing that any ſhould *periſh*, but

but that all ſhould come to Repentance. For this gracious End he is pleaſed to correct us: and his Corrections are Tokens of his *Love*: for whom the Lord *loveth* he chaſteneth, and ſcourgeth every Son whom he receiveth. And though we have been ſinful Creatures, and deſerving Objects of his *Hatred*; though we have been diſobedient and rebellious, nor hearkened to the Voice of his Word; yet if we are brought by Afflictions to learn his Statutes; he will, for Chriſt's Sake, remember our Sins and Iniquities no more; but will tenderly receive his *returning Children* to the Arms of his *paternal Love*.—— How great is his Mercy towards us, that he does not ſuffer us to periſh in our Sins! but as our Spiritual Phyſician adminiſters the Cup of Affliction

to our ſick and dying Souls ;—which, though *bitter* and *depreſſing* to the *outward Man*, is nevertheleſs *ſweet* and *ſalutary* to the *inward* :—for though our *outward Man periſh, yet the inward Man is renewed Day by Day* : and how much better is it that our *outward Man periſh* than that the *whole Man*, both Soul and Body, ſhould *periſh everlaſtingly* !—Nay, were every *Hour* and *Minute* of our Lives filled up with diſtracting Pain and Heart-felt Sickneſs,—or were we to be ſeverely tried in the hotteſt Furnace of Affliction till Time ſhould be no more,—or even to ſuffer the greateſt Tortures the utmoſt Cruelty of Man could invent for the tedious Space of Hundreds and Thouſands of Years, without Intermiſſion or Alleviation ;—how much more *fearful* a

Thing

Thing would it be *finally* to *fall into the Hands of the living God !*—how infinitely more *dreadful* to be caſt into Hell, and to ſuffer the Vengeance of eternal Fire !—Such muſt be the wretched and deplorable Condition of thoſe, who do not live and die in the Lord :—of thoſe who do not put off the old Man, and put on the new ; and, when the outward Man is periſhing, do not become regenerate and renewed in the Spirit of their Minds.

And this, indeed, ought to be our conſtant Endeavour, by the Grace of God, ſince our outward Man, Alas ! is *daily periſhing* :—St. Paul truly ſays, *We die daily*. And as we *daily ſin*, it is our Duty *daily to repent*, and to be renewed Day by Day in the inward Man. If we reflect on the

Frailties of Mortality ;—how conſtantly our mortal Bodies are ſubject to Decay, and tending to Diſſolution ;—how our Time is continually upon the Wing and fleeting away ; —how we are haſtening every Breath we draw ſtill nearer and nearer to the Grave,— ſtill nearer Heaven or Hell,—to a *happy*, or a *miſerable Eternity* ; we muſt be forcibly convinced of the great Neceſſity of a holy Life,—of our unremitting Attention to the infinite Concerns of our Souls, and our daily Improvement and *Growth in Grace*, and in the Knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt.—The *inward* Man muſt be renewed Day by Day. All our *outward* Forms of Godlineſs, and religious Performances will avail us nothing *without the Religion of the Heart*. If we have

not

not ſo *learned* Chriſt, we are, as to any happy Effect, quite *ignorant* of him: and if we *love* not the Lord Jeſus Chriſt *in Sincerity*; but, at the ſame Time that we profeſs to *know* and *love him*,—refuſe to keep his Commandments,—act in direct Oppoſition to the Precepts of his Goſpel,—nor ſhew the *Genuineneſs* of our *Faith* by the *Goodneſs* of our *Works*;—when we are ſummoned to appear before his dread Tribunal, how ſhall we ſtand amazed and confounded to find our Ignorance of Chriſt, and Want of Love to him, turn to our own Deſtruction, and occaſion that direful Condemnation from the Mouth of the tremendous Judge eternal; "Inaſmuch as ye have "neither *known me*,—*loved me*,—nor *obeyed* "*me*,—I profeſs, I *know you not*,—depart "from me, ye Workers of Iniquity!"

What a miſerable Deception do thouſands put upon themſelves in depending upon the Works of the *outward Man!* How great and deplorable will be their Diſappointment at the Day of Judgment!—how will they ſtand abaſhed with drooping Heads before the Bar of God to find, that theſe *dead* Works will never gain them Admittance into the Kingdom of Heaven;—that their *ſuperficial Form* of Godlineſs,—their *unſubſtantial* Righteouſneſs, and *Shadow* of Religion,—proves too *light* in the Balance;—of no *Weight* in the *Scales* of divine Juſtice;—and, as they themſelves are *dead*—in Treſpaſſes and Sins;—that they muſt for ever depart from the Preſence of the *living God*,—who is not the God of the *dead* but of the *living!*—— We may frequent the Lord's

Houſe

Houſe upon his holy Day, and at the ſame Time be far from hallowing his Sabbaths; —the lifting up of *our Hands* without *our Hearts*—cannot be worſhipping him in *Spirit* and *in Truth*. The *Knee* may *bow* before him, while there is no *Proſtration* of the *Heart*. Some, indeed, are ſo far from proſtrating the Heart, that they do not *bend* the *Knee*:—the *proud Phariſee ſtood* and prayed: —(excepting Caſes of Inconvenience or Inability) God forbid that any one's *Pride of Heart* ſhould make them above kneeling in Supplication before the Lord, their Maker! ——Others there are, who *indevoutly ſit* and *pray*:—but this is neither to worſhip God *aright* with the *outward*, nor the *inward Man*. —— When our Devotion, (or rather our *Form of Devotion*) in the Houſe of God,

God, and *in* his *awful Preſence*; (--" for " ſurely the Lord is in this Place ") is mixed with *indecent Whiſperings*,---*offenſive Talking*,---and *ridiculous Demeanour*,----can this be a *reaſonable Service*? Not very *reaſonable*,---nor very *pious*. This is paying the *Devil* a Part of that Worſhip, which is due to *God alone*.---When our bleſſed Lord ſtood upon a *Pinnacle* of the Temple, and had an offer made him by the *Prince* of Darkneſs of all the Kingdoms of the World, and the Glory of them, if he would fall down and Worſhip him; he replied with a Dignity peculiar to his divine Perſon;—Get thee behind me, Satan!---thou ſhalt worſhip the Lord thy God, and him only ſhalt thou ſerve:---and when the *outward* Worſhipper is thinking of the Plea-

ſures

ſures and Vanities,---the Acqueſts and Glories of the World;---happy would it be for him, if he would repulſe the Attacks of the Tempter in ſimilar Words to his Saviour's; ---Get thee behind me, Satan! I will *worſhip the Lord my God*, and *him only* will I *ſerve*.

We may repeat a Form of Prayer in our Families, or in our Cloſets, as well as in the Church,---without worſhipping our Maker, or becoming Objects of his Favour:--*mere oral Petitions* can never redound to *his Honour*, or *our own Benefit*:---it muſt be the *Heart-felt Prayer* alone, that can *pierce* the Skies, and *reach* the Throne of Grace. The Prayer of the *outward Man* will not be heard.

We may go to the Lord's Table, and partake

partake of the conſecrated Elements of Bread and Wine---without the ſtrengthening and refreſhing of our Souls by the Body and Blood of Chriſt.——

Our Church declares in her Twenty-ninth Article ;---" The wicked, and ſuch as be " void of a lively Faith, although they do " carnally and viſibly preſs with their Teeth " (as St. Auguſtine ſaith) the Sacrament " of the Body and Blood of Chriſt ; yet in " no wiſe are they Partakers of Chriſt ; but " rather, to their Condemnation, do eat and " drink the Sign or Sacrameut of ſo great " a Thing."——And thus every other Chriſtian Duty, that is not *done* from a *Chriſtian Principle*, but only *to be ſeen of Men*, can never be ſaid to be *well-done*.—— *An unfeigned Love to God,---a genuine Faith*

in

in the Redeemer, and *a firm Reliance upon the Spirit of Grace*,—*can alone conſtitute the Goodneſs of every religious Action*.——Works done antecedently to Faith in Chriſt only for the Sake of external Appearances, and in conformity to the Faſhion of the World, cannot be pleaſing to God.—Such *only* are the Works of the *outward Man* : nor can the *Doer* of them, who ſtands in Judgment before the *great Searcher of Hearts*, expect to hear that approving Sentence pronounced to him, that will be pronounced to every *Well-doer*, and *true Believer* ;—" *Well-done*, " thou *good*, and *faithful* Servant, enter thou " into the Joy of thy Lord ! "

Let us now proceed to the laſt Part of the Text ;—*For our light Affliction, which*

is but for a Moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory. ———How *light* is the *heavieſt Load* of Affliction, how *ſhort* the *longeſt Time* of it's Continuance, if compared with the *Weight* of Glory, and the *Infinity* of the Reward, which will ſucceed it !—A Reward ſo *weighty* as infinitely to *preponderate* all our Sufferings :—The Sufferings of this preſent Time are not worthy to be compared with the Glory that ſhall be revealed in us. And, what, though we are a *little chaſtiſed*, if we are to be *greatly rewarded* ?—Were it not, indeed, for *the Goodneſs of God* through the *Merits* of our *ſuffering Saviour*, we could have expected *nothing but Chaſtiſement without any Reward* :—poor *ſinful* Creatures as we are, had we offered up ourſelves as Victims

tims upon the high Altar of the Croſs, and voluntarily poured forth the whole Fountain of our Blood from every Vein of the Heart; could we have ſuppoſed theſe *bloody Sufferings* would have been accepted as a Propitiation for our Sins?— No!—*only* the *Blood of Jeſus Chriſt cleanſeth us from all Sin*:—none but the *immaculate Lamb of God* can *take away the Sins of the World*.—And ſince all our Sufferings could not expiate our Sins; where is our Merit to claim the grand Reward of an eternal Weight of Glory?—Chriſt hath Satisfied the Demands of the Law by his ſinleſs Obedience;—and we,—through the unmeritted Clemency, and infinite Goodneſs of God,—receive the Reward. But though our Salvation is wholly the Gift of God through Jeſus Chriſt;—

we are nevertheleſs required to work it out with Fear and Trembling.—So that all our *Sufferings*,--and all our *Works*--are *only* accepted through the *atoning Sacrifice* of the *Croſs*,—and the *great Work* of *Salvation wrought* for us by the *merciful Redeemer* of *Mankind*. We muſt look up then to the *bleeding Saviour* for the Acceptance of our *Sufferings*,—and to Chriſt, our *Righteouſneſs*, for the *Recompence* of *Reward*.——Why then ſhould we *repine* at *Sufferings*, ſince, through Chriſt, they will ſo much conduce to our unſpeakable Benefit? *For our light Affliction, which is but for a Moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory*:— why then ſhould we *repine*, indeed, and charge God fooliſhly? Every *grateful Heart* will rather *bleſs* and *praiſe* the Lord for his

Goodneſs.

Goodneſs. The Sufferings of this *mortal Life how ſhort!—the Miſeries* of *eternal Death how long!*---and if it pleaſe the merciful and gracious Lord by means of temporal Sufferings to free us from eternal Torments, our Hearts can never be too thankful.—" 'Tis " good for me," ſays holy David, " that I " have been afflicted : "—'tis good for every one frequently to have their corrupt Affections purged from their Droſs in the Furnace of Affliction, even as the Silver, which from the Earth is tried aud purified ſeven Times in the Fire.—The bleſſed Captain of our Salvation himſelf was made perfect through Sufferings. What a long and painful Warfare did he undergo!—From the ignominious Manger to the bloody Croſs—his ſpotleſs Life was one continued Scene of

Sufferings:

Sufferings :—well might he be ſtiled a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with Grief.

Soon as the Saviour of the World was born,--as a Preſage of the Hardſhips and Sufferings that awaited his future Life,--he was deprived of the ordinary Accommodations of the Inn at Bethlehem, and wanted, --what the meaneſt Infant did not want,-- the Convenience of a Cradle.—In his infant State he was driven with his Parents into Egypt to ſecrete him from the murderous Cruelty of the blood-thirſty Herod, who ſought his innocent Life.—Upon the Commencement of Youth, he was employed in the laborious Occupation of a Carpenter.— In his maturer Years, when he entered upon his grand miniſterial Office, and began to

publiſh

publiſh tke glad Tidings of Salvation to the wretched Sons of Men,—with what little Joy did they receive thoſe acceptable Tidings !---with what great Indignity did they treat their Lord and Saviour !---When he went about doing good to the Souls and Bodies of Men,--caſting out Devils,--forgiving the Sins of ſupplicating Penitents ;---making the blind to ſee,--the lame to walk, --the deaf to hear,--and the dumb to ſpeak, --reſtoring the ſick to Health, and the dead to Life ;---all the Return made him by an ungrateful World was---Deriſion and Blaſphemy,---Perſecution, and Death. He was made the Scorn of Men, and the outcaſt of the People ;--charged with caſting out Devils through Beelzebub the Chief of the Devils ;--perſecuted from City to City,---

nor

nor had the Son of Man where to lay his Head : and at laſt,--(after a Life of Poverty and Diſtreſs,--of Labour and Sorrow ;--- after his Heart-rending Paſſion in the Garden) (evidenced by his ſanguine Sweat diſtilling from his ſacred Brows, and falling down to the Ground)--to complete his tranſcendent Miſeries,--,(" for never was " Sorrow like unto his Sorrow ")--after fainting under the oppreſſive Load of his Croſs, (though at the ſame Time he ſuſtained the onerous Guilt of a whole World) ---wearing a lacerating Crown of Thorns he is conducted to the Top of the execrable Calvary :---the horrid Inſtrument of his Execution is laid on the Ground to receive him :---the ſubmiſſive Redeemer reclines upon that " Bed of Sorrows : "---they nail him to

the

the cruel Croſs : fix it erect in the Earth : —the *bleſſed Jeſus* hangs—ſupported by the torturing Nails—on the *accurſed Tree*—all covered with his precious Blood--in Agony too great for Tongue to tell. And, after three Hours bloody Conflict, infinitely more trying than Humanity ever experienced ;— affecting *Wonder to relate!*—THE LORD OF LIFE EXPIRES.——The *needleſs Spear* is plunged into his *commiſerating Heart*, which had juſt been *bleeding it's laſt Drop for a loſt World*.---Oh ! ye holy Martyrs ! well might ye ſuffer for your Saviour, who had ſuffered ſo much for You.—What were all your Fires, and Racks, and Tortures,—compared with God's fiery Indignation againſt Sinners, and the excruciating Agonies of the Croſs, inflicted upon the Holy Jeſus for the

Iniquities of us all ?—And, Oh ! all ye Sons and Daughters of Affliction, how patiently ought ye to bear the Croſs after your ſuffering Redeemer !—When you lie ſadly languiſhing upon the Bed of Sickneſs and Death ;—remember, that your Sorrows are not ſo numerous as your Sins.—Do not preſume to rank yourſelves with your ſinleſs Saviour, and to think, that you have done nothing amiſs ;—but confeſs, as ye ought, with the penitent Thief, that your Sufferings are the due Reward of your Deeds.—All our Sufferings here, my Chriſtian Brethren, will ſoon be over ;—may they be made inſtrumental, by the Grace of God, to our Exemption from thoſe dreadful Sufferings, that ſhall never have an End ! and may we not only bear them with Chriſtian

Reſignation,

Reſignation, but thankfully kiſs the gracious Hand that inflicts them !——And when the Body can no longer ſuſtain its Load of Sufferings ;—may the Lord ſupport our *Souls* in the *Hour* of *Death*,—that they *faint not* ;—and grant, that though our *outward Man periſh*,—yet that the *inward Man* may be found to have been *renewed Day by Day* ;—and, finally, *that our light Affliction, which* has been *but for a Moment, may work for us a far more exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory !*

All which may the gracious and eternal God mercifully grant through the MERITORIOUS SUFFERINGS of our HOLY and ADORABLE REDEEMER ! AMEN.

F I N I S.

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